

REFER IN REPLY TO THE FOLLOWING:

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DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR

OFFICE OF INDIAN AFFAIRS

WASHINGTON



MAR 28 1916

Mrs. Minnie Moore Wilson,
Kissimmee, Florida.

Madam:

The Office has been requested by Mr. Joseph K. Griffis to write you in regard to the lands of the Seminole Nation in Florida.

With funds appropriated by the acts of August 15, 1894 (28 Stat. L., 303), March 2, 1895 (28 Stat. L., 892), June 10, 1896 (29 Stat. L., 337) June 7, 1897 (30 Stat. L., 78), March 1, 1899 (30 Stat. L., 938), and June 6, 1900 (31 Stat. L., 302), there were purchased for the Seminole Indians in Florida 23,061.72 acres of land in southern Florida at a total cost of \$13,307.52, and on June 28, 1911, 3680 acres of vacant public land adjacent to the Everglades were withdrawn by Executive order for these Indians. This makes a total of 26,741.72 acres now bought or set aside as a reservation for these Indians. Some of this land is reported to be valuable, while other tracts are said to be swampy and probably they are of little value for agricultural purposes at this time, although this condition may be changed should the draining of the Everglades, or a large part, be successful.

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These Indians have earned their livelihood by hunting and trapping, and until recently they have derived considerable profit from the sale of alligator hides, but this source of revenue is gradually falling off, and they are now to a large extent dependent on the abundant fish and game of the Everglades for their subsistence.

Owing to their wandering habits and the character of a large part of their land, it is not wise to restrict them to a limited reservation as long as the Everglades are available as a sort of communal hunting grounds. If drainage work in the Everglades, however, is entirely successful, these Indians will of necessity be forced to abandon to a large extent their present wandering habits and manner of living. Recognizing this, the Florida Legislature, in 1913, passed a bill giving to these Indians more than 200,000 acres of swamp land, chiefly valuable as a hunting reserve, but this bill was vetoed by the Governor.

There was introduced at the present session of Congress H. R. 9229, which authorizes the purchase from the state of Florida of not to exceed four townships (92,160 acres) for the benefit of the Seminole Indians, but this bill has not yet been enacted into law.

It provides that the Secretary of the Interior shall hold the title to said lands for the Indians, to be used in common as a reservation, with the limitation that the same shall remain inalienable until further ordered by Congress.

Respectfully,


Assistant Commissioner.

3-BMR-22